



Strategic Plan

FY25-26



Halifax County Public Health System

27 May 2025

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Executive Summary:

Founded in 2022, the Halifax County Substance Use Coalition (HCSUC) was established to provide connectivity between public health and the community resources that support substance use prevention, support, and recovery. The inaugural group met to begin the work of collaboration toward holistic community support, bringing mental health, MAT providers, law enforcement, probation, schools, and public health together. The initial exercise was community mapping to determine what resources existed, identify gaps, and determine who was missing from the conversation. In 2023, persons with living and lived experience attended and provided a forum for community agencies to hear about the challenges, strengths, and needs of the community they serve. To date, the HCSUC has educated participants around current efforts and initiatives, provided updates from County Management on opioid settlement funds processes, and facilitated work between agencies to improve the Release of Information process to support persons seeking and in treatment.

In 2024, in collaboration with ECU Health North & the Halifax County Public Health System, the Halifax County Community Health Needs Assessment was released, identifying four priority Health Need Areas: Access to Healthcare, Behavioral Health (Mental Health & Substance Abuse), Chronic Disease Prevention (Obesity), and Maternal, Fetal & Infant Health (Halifax County Public Health System & ECU Health North, 2024, p. 18-19). The Behavioral Health priority is inclusive of mental health and substance abuse, identifying Halifax County as lower than state and national average for excessive drinking and opioid use emergency department utilization but higher than state and national averages for alcohol involved crash deaths and opioid overdose deaths with higher than state and national averages for buprenorphine providers (Halifax County Public Health System & ECU Health North, 2024, p. 49-50). Community survey respondents indicated that alcohol/drug addiction was the most important health problem affecting the health of the community at 55% (Halifax County Public Health System & ECU Health North, 2024, p. 50). The results were consistent across age and race demographics aligning with mental health concerns.

All HCSUC meetings are open to anyone impacting or impacted by substance use, to provide a forum to discuss evolving needs and ideas, share resources, stay abreast with education and information, share upcoming community events and initiatives, and provide local data and statistics to understand the environment in which the substance use epidemic continues to exist. To maximize attendance and access, all meetings are held in a hybrid format on a bi-monthly cadence. Between meetings, event announcements, news, trainings, and other relevant substance use information is shared via email.

In order to formalize efforts, strengthen collaboration and partnerships, and increase the HCSUC's ability to pursue actionable objectives, a strategic plan was created in 2025. The strategic plan will put into writing the unifying objective of all participants to eliminate substance misuse, empower those seeking recovery, and support those in recovery while

empowering the community to holistic health, mental and physical, heal from trauma, and pursue true wellness.

Definitions:

Substance Use – the use of selected substances, including alcohol, tobacco products, illicit drugs, prescription medications, inhalants, and other substances that can be consumed, inhaled, injected, or otherwise absorbed into the body with possible dependence and other detrimental effects. It encompasses a wide range of behaviors, from occasional use to chronic dependence and, misuse to abuse.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, June 26). Substance use. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/hsr/sources-definitions/substance-use.htm>

Harm Reduction – Harm reduction is a practical and transformative approach that incorporates community-driven public health strategies — including prevention, risk reduction, and health promotion — to empower people who use drugs (and their families) with the choice to live healthy, self-directed, and purpose-filled lives.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2024, December 20). Harm reduction. <https://www.samhsa.gov/substance-use/harm-reduction>

Guiding Principles & Values:

The HCSUC's guiding principles are informed by harm reduction principles, evidence-based strategies, and the four pillars of drug strategy. These guiding principles include:

Community Strengths

- Recognize that Halifax County neighborhoods, institutions, families, and individuals have unique perspectives as a result of their lived and living experience
- Utilize community and individual strengths and successes to continue to develop community assets
- Tailor solutions to the diversity and uniqueness of Halifax County
- Regard citizens as experts of their own culture and access their cultural expertise when engaging the community

Evidence informed

- Informed decision-making based on diverse evidence from multiple sources, community models that work, and perspectives of living/lived experience
- Set goals and develop indicators to track progress and evaluate the performance of approaches, including unintended outcomes/impacts

- Use champions with expertise related to specific tasks
- Align needs with community assessment tools

Non-stigmatizing

- All people matter, regardless of substance involvement, past or present
- Challenge harmful labels, stereotypes, discrimination and oppression
- Use trauma informed language that is free of judgement, dignifying, and respectful
- Address myths about substance use and people who use them
- Use of community and public education locally and systemically
- Utilize trauma informed approaches

Accessible

- Promote programs, services, communities and resources that are accessible and appropriate to help reduce inequities faced by individuals who use substances and their supports in all environments
- Encourage/invite community participation

Collaborative

- Encourage and enhance cross –sector collaboration
- Nurture partnerships between citizens/residents, community groups, service providers, government, business and persons with lived and living experience
- Engage community members in a full and meaningful way

Hopeful

- Build on our shared expectations, ambitions, and optimism for improvements in the impacts of substance use on our community
- Encourage a realistic hope that acknowledges the challenges we face in resolving problems

Equity Focused

- Consider the relationships and impact of social determinants of health (SDOH), including how determinants of health and inequities reinforce each other
- Collaborate with committees/groups working to address SDOH in other areas
- Utilize culturally appropriate models of SDOH

Vision Statement:

The HCSUC will strive to create safe spaces for honest dialogue, learning with people who use substances and those that support them, to create positive systemic change within the Halifax County community.

Mission Statement:

Through collaborative dialogue, partnerships, and community action, the HCSUC will promote community strategies that are trauma informed, evidence based, and equity focused, to reduce the impact of problematic substance use and harm that reflects the needs of the Halifax County community.

SWOT Analysis:

<p><u>STRENGTHS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diversity• Resources to initiate recovery• Linkage between local and state agencies• Cross collaboration opportunities	<p><u>WEAKNESSES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of living/lived experience• Resources to support recovery• Funding• No inpatient in county• No/Inconsistent participation from key stakeholders• Staff turnover• Lack of knowledge of community resources among the community and stakeholders
<p><u>OPPORTUNITIES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding• Community engagement• Education/Anti-stigma/Harm Reduction• SDOH partners	<p><u>THREATS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Similar coalitions• Funding• Past programming challenges• Lack of SDOH resources• Transportation challenges for persons who use substances

Strategic Goals:

1. Influence public policy on substance use, harm reduction principles, and anti-stigma needs by increasing awareness of local needs and efforts.
2. Secure funding and/or resources for substance use prevention and support initiatives.
3. Increase community and agency participation, collaboration, and engagement in harm reduction education and efforts.

Objectives:

Build Capacity:

The HCSUC will increase coalition attendance and participation through education and outreach initiatives, including but not limited to bi-monthly educational opportunities and reciprocal support opportunities.	HCSUC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11/2025 Turning Points WDB joined
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Education:

The HCSUC will educate the community and coalition participants around substance use and harm reduction principles through collaboration and targeted public educational opportunities and events.	HCSUC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5/2025 UNC Street Drug Analysis Lab • 7/2025 Locking Prescription Vials & NC Secretary of State Trademark Enforcement • 11/2025 Insight Human Services • 3/2026 Playbl
The HCSUC will host a yearly living/lived experience forum event for the coalition to seek to understand the needs of the substance use community where bi-directional dialogue can	HCSUC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7/2023 Lived Experience Panel Discussion • 9/2025 Lived Experience Panel Discussion, anonymous survey project proposed

occur in a safe and brave respectful space, free of stigma.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9/2026 Lived Experience Discussion Panel planned
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Local Data:

The HCSUC will facilitate the collection and dissemination of local data, specifically around substance use, to improve an understanding of current conditions to identify opportunities to support prevention and recovery support.	HCSUC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7/2025 Webpage created 11/2025 project to map tobacco/vape retailers proposed Ongoing
The HCSUC will work to advance the creation of a Halifax County Overdose Fatality Review Team.	HCSUC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing
The HCSUC will explore and support wastewater analysis to obtain Halifax County specific data.	HCSUC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing
The HCSUC will advocate for Halifax County agencies to enroll with the UNC Street Drug Analysis Lab to facilitate Halifax County specific data and support the informed decision making of Halifax County community members.	HCSUC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5/2025 UNC Street Drug Analysis Lab Ongoing

Support Current Efforts:

The HCSUC will serve in a technical support role to participating agencies and the community at large to increase collaboration to reducing stigma and increase harm reduction efforts.	HCSUC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5/2023 MAT vs OTP Presentation by Morse Clinic 11/2025 Fentanyl & Xylazine test strips donated to HCHD by Halifax County Management
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7/2025 Connect Public Defender’s Office with Monach Mobile for Courthouse location • Ongoing
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Policy & Legislative Impact:

The HCSUC will work to educate and inform key stakeholders around local substance use issues to increase decisional capacity with policy and legislative actions.	HCSUC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3/2025 Partner with Halifax County Management on Opioid Settlement Strategic Planning • Ongoing
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Un-Silo Resources:

The HCSUC will work to reduce barriers to collaboration through the intentional creation of safe and accessible spaces to learn and support one another.	HCSUC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5/2023 ROI Discussion • 10/2025 BH Stakeholder Resource Event • 10/2026 BH Resource Stakeholder Event planned • Ongoing
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Marketing Plan:

The HCSUC will create a brochure that all participating agencies can share as appropriate with the community to encourage participation, partnership, and collaboration. The brochure will be created in a pdf, printable format and updated yearly following the review of the strategic plan.

Financial Plan:

The HCSUC is not supported by any funding at this time and all participation is voluntary as representatives of area agencies or self. The future plan includes the pursuit of grant funding, letters of support, and/or in-kind resources to pursue HCSUC initiatives or projects. Each initiative or project will outline its financial plan respectively.

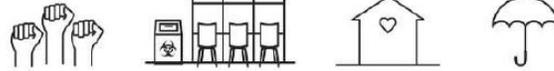
Team:

Halifax County Public Health System – Facilitator
LME/MCO - Trillium
Halifax County Management
Halifax County EMS
Halifax County Law Enforcement
Halifax County Crisis Response
Halifax County Educational Institutions
Halifax County MAT Services
Halifax County Mental Health Services
Halifax County Lived/Living Experience
Halifax County Support Services
Halifax County Courts
Halifax County Probation
Halifax County Jail
Haliwa-Saponi Tribe
Stepping Up Initiative
ECU Health North

HARM REDUCTION INTERVENTIONS

(H)arm (R)eduction:

A philosophical and political movement focused on shifting power and resources to people most vulnerable to structural violence



(h)arm (r)eduction:

The approach and fundamental beliefs in how to provide the services



risk reduction:

Tools and services to reduce potential harm



The “risk itself (e.g. related to drug use or sex work) that you’re discussing

The “mindset” that someone brings to the situation, including thoughts, mood, and expectations



The physical and social environments of where the person is, and their perception of how that can promote/reduce risk

RISK

- What issue is being presented?
- What other possible sources of harm might be connected to the main issue?
- What drug is being used? What is the risk of overdose?

SET

- How are they feeling? Confident? Angry? Anxious?
- Are they physically in pain or hurt? Do they need to get well?
- Can they engage with you fully? Are their basic needs being met?

SETTING

- What is the physical environment where the potential harm is occurring? In a home? At work? On the street?
- Who is around them? Police, bystanders, other participants? How does the person present to these people? How will they react?

Case Study : Jessica

Jessica has been using heroin on and off for the past 10 years. Jessica stopped using for a few months while she was with her ex, but they recently broke up. She is feeling depressed and anxious and is looking to use again. She buys a bag and heads to the syringe exchange for some new points and heads to her encampment in a rush.

Revised 2020

FOR MORE RESOURCES, VISIT [HARMREDUCTION.ORG](https://harmreduction.org)

[/HarmReductionCoalition](https://www.facebook.com/HarmReductionCoalition) [/HarmReductionCoalition](https://www.youtube.com/HarmReductionCoalition) [@harmreduction](https://twitter.com/harmreduction) [@harmreduction](https://www.instagram.com/harmreduction)

**NATIONAL
HARM REDUCTION
COALITION**

A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

A Four-Pillar Approach
to Drug Problems in Vancouver

PREVENTION

TREATMENT

ENFORCEMENT

HARM REDUCTION

REVISED



Donald MacPherson,
Drug Policy Coordinator, City of Vancouver
April 24, 2001

10.1 Prevention Approaches

Prevention strategies consist of three main approaches: primary prevention, which attempts to prevent substance use altogether or delay the onset of substance use; secondary prevention interventions aimed at the early stages of substance misuse before serious problems have developed; and tertiary prevention interventions, which focus on preventing serious harm to individuals who have become addicted to drugs. Many interventions within the areas of secondary and tertiary prevention can also be referred to as harm reduction. This paper acknowledges that in certain contexts different language will be used to describe what are essentially efforts to prevent further harm or minimize the harm associated with substance misuse.

11.1 Defining Treatment

Treatment refers to a series of interventions and supports that enable individuals to deal with their addiction problems, make healthier decisions about their lives, and eventually resume their places in the community. To successfully help an individual through this process, a continuum of treatment with multiple points of contact is required for treatment to be effective. Basic primary health care services are often the entry point for individuals into more specific drug treatment approaches. These include detox, methadone, outpatient and residential treatment programs, dual diagnosis programs, as well as programs for women, Aboriginal people and other ethnic populations. A range of treatment options that target different populations is essential.

12.1 Defining Enforcement

Enforcement consists of a broad range of activities carried out by regulatory agencies, licensing authorities, police, the courts, and other sectors within the criminal justice system. Coordinated enforcement is a key pillar in any drug strategy. Police have a difficult and critical role to undertake in minimizing the harm caused by substance misuse.

In order to uphold public safety and create a climate of social responsibility, the laws against the sale of illicit substances, associated crimes, and the misuse of alcohol must be enforced. This *Framework for Action* attempts to clarify that the four-pillar approach deals with people who have an addiction and need treatment, while clearly stating public disorder, including the open drug scene, must be stopped. In short, addiction needs treatment and criminal behaviour needs enforcement.

13.1 Defining Harm Reduction

If we are going to implement a successful drug strategy in Vancouver, we must acknowledge the need for harm reduction programs and realize that accepting harm reduction as part of the strategy does not mean condoning the use of illicit drugs. It means accepting the fact that drug use does and will occur—and accepting the need to minimize the harm this has on communities and individuals. And it means recognizing that abstinence-based strategies are often impractical and ineffective in dealing with the street-entrenched drug scene.

Macpherson, D. (2001). *A framework for action: A four-pillar approach to drug problems in Vancouver*.

2024 Community Health Needs Assessment

Summary Findings: Halifax County 2024 Priority Health Need Areas

To achieve the study objectives in the 2024 assessment, both new and existing data were collected and reviewed. New data included information from web-based surveys of adults (18+ years) and focus groups; various local organizations, community members, and health service providers within Halifax County participated. Existing data included information regarding the demographics, health and healthcare resources, behavioral health, disease trends, and county rankings. The data collection and analysis process began in January 2024 and continued through July 2024.

Throughout Halifax County, significant variations in demographics and health needs exist within the county. At the same time, consistent needs are present across the whole county and serve as the basis for determining priority health needs at the county level. This document will discuss the priority health need areas for Halifax County, as well as how the severity of those needs might vary across subpopulations based on the information obtained and analyzed during this process.

Through the prioritization process, the CHNA Steering Committee identified Halifax County’s priority health need areas from a list of over 100 health indicators. Please note that the final priority needs were not ranked in any order of importance and county health leaders will engage in each of the three priority need areas. After looking at all relevant data and feedback from the CHNA Steering Committee, the Halifax focus areas identified as countywide priorities for the 2024 CHNA are Access to Healthcare, Behavioral Health (Mental Health and Substance Abuse), Chronic Disease Prevention (Obesity), and Maternal, Fetal, and Infant Health, as seen in Figure I.5.

Figure I.5: Halifax County 2024 Priority Health Needs



Health, healthcare and associated community needs are very much interrelated, and often impact each other. Although this CHNA process considered these areas separately, their impact on each other should be considered when planning for programs or services to address community needs.

Many health needs are also related to underlying societal and socioeconomic factors. Research has consistently shown that income, education, physical environment, and other such demographic and socioeconomic factors affect the health status of individuals and communities. This CHNA acknowledges that link and focuses on identifying and documenting the greatest health needs as they present themselves today. As plans are developed to address these needs, the Committee's goal is to work with other community organizations to address underlying factors that could drive long-term improvements to the county population's health.

Halifax County Public Health System, & ECU Health North. (2024). *Halifax County Community Health Needs Assessment*.

<https://www.halifaxnc.com/DocumentCenter/View/4806/2024-Halifax-County-Community-Health-Needs-Assessment?bidId=>